

Painted Partridge are below 0.5% of the natural vegetation. It also shows how selective the Painted Partridge is in its feeding habits. Therefore, its food is not governed by the availability of certain plant species which occur in large number, but it searches and selects its favoured food, which may be only 0.1% of the natural vegetation. This is also the case with insect food. The orthoptera represent by far the greater majority of insects at Bisalpur but the Painted Partridge eats large ants, *Monomorium indicum*, and small lady-bird beetles.

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#### 6. THE JUNGLE BUSH QUAIL [*PERDICULA ASIATICA* (LATHAM)] : A NEW RACE FROM SOUTH INDIA

In 1963, the Virus Research Centre's field station at Vellore, North Arcot District, Madras, sent some birds to the Bombay Natural History Society for identification. A Jungle Bush Quail [*Perdicula asiatica* (Latham)] appeared to differ from those in the Society's collection by the throat being a dark chocolate-brown as against various shades of chestnut in birds from other areas. H.A. suggested that, with a few more specimens, it might be possible to determine whether this was only an individual variation or represented a different race in that area. In February 1964, R.R. obtained eight more specimens. An examination of the 78 skins now available in Bombay does not support the position outlined in the SYNOPSIS, where Ripley accepts three races from India:

*Perdicula asiatica asiatica* (Latham) (Type loc.: Mahratta region). In Rajasthan, Bombay, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, and south through Andhra to Madras and Mysore.

*Perdicula asiatica punjaubi* Whistler (Ambala, Punjab). In Kashmir, East Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, and Uttar Pradesh.

*Perdicula asiatica vidali* Whistler & Kinnear (Kelsi, South Konkan). In Malabar Coast through Kerala.

Our examination prompts the following remarks:

#### ***Perdicula asiatica asiatica***

In *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 38 : 385, Whistler restricted the type locality to Poona, whence we have 3 ♂♂ and 1 ♀. Unfortunately they have clipped wings indicating that they were purchased from trappers, but it is unlikely that they were brought over any great distance.

Both the males and the female are dark reddish brown above with none of the cream-coloured shaft stripes on the upper surface. The few marks both dark and pale are blotches rather than longitudinal streaks. Specimens from Khandala, the Bombay Konkan, and a female from Dedipada, Rajpipla, Gujarat, may be included in this form.

The single female from Poona and two from Panchgani are more chestnut below, the colour of the abdomen and breast almost merging into the chestnut of the chin. The other females of *asiatica* and the other races have the underparts of various shades of vinous brown, but with the chin always of a distinctly different colour. Juveniles from north Konkan have the upper parts more prominently streaked.

#### ***Perdicula asiatica punjaubi***

A pair from Kaira and a ♀ from Danta, Mahi Kanta, both in north Gujarat, are paler, with no trace of reddish brown in the upper plumage, and have the upper parts more strongly marked with distinct pale shaft stripes as in the grey quails (*Coturnix*) and fewer markings on the nape. Birds from Baghat State, Simla Hills, NW. Himalayas, are very similar above with rather darker chins though not as dark as those of the new form described below.

#### ***Perdicula asiatica vidali***

There is only one old and badly damaged specimen from Ratnagiri, South Konkan, available for examination. The original description states that both adults and immature birds differ from the typical race in the deep reddish tint of the whole upper plumage, a character which is more particularly marked on the crown. The black barring of the lower plumage was also said to be broader than in the typical form. Apart from the series from South Konkan, Whistler & Kinnear only saw one more skin from Malappuram, in Malabar District, now in Kerala State, and specifically stated that the three Nilgiri specimens from the northern face of Seagore (?) 'do not of course belong to it'. Sálím Ali obtained no specimen in Travancore and Cochin, and we do not know if the range as in the SYNOPSIS is warranted.

A pair from Chandgod, Belgaum District, and two birds from Salsette Island have their foreheads strongly washed with red and are probably close to this form.

#### ***Perdicula asiatica* subsp. nov.**

The eight new specimens (6 ♂♂ and 2 ♀♀) were obtained by R.R. from gypsies who had trapped them in the Government Reserved Forest about 25 miles south-west of Vellore, North Arcot District,

Madras. As they had their wing-feathers clipped and were not in very good condition, they were retained alive for some time and, in June 1964, were sent to Bombay.

All the nine birds, both males and females, have consistently dark chocolate-brown chins and can be picked out from among the others. They are paler than typical *asiatica*, with no trace of reddish wash on the upper parts. The pale streak markings are also stronger, though not as heavy as in *punjaubi*. It has not been possible to compare them with specimens of *P. a. ceylonensis*, which is illustrated in Henry's BIRDS OF CEYLON with a dark chocolate chin. However, the type description of *ceylonensis* states that 'the upper plumage of both sexes is much darker throughout, with the black blotching and pale shaft-streaks of the scapulars reduced in extent so that these parts do not contrast so strongly with the rest of the plumage as in the typical race'. Thus it does not seem likely that we are dealing with *ceylonensis* at Vellore.

We, therefore, select a male obtained on 13 November 1963 near Vellore, bearing Virus Research Centre No. R.R. 1080 and Bombay Natural History Society Register No. 21554, as the type and name it:

***Perdicula asiatica vellorei* subsp. nov.**

The absence of sufficient material from the surrounding areas prevents us from defining the limits of distribution of this race.

Whistler (*J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 41 : 480) referred to the probability of more races in southern India, and there is no doubt that the description of *vellorei* does not complete the work.

We have specimens from Shimoga, Palkonda Hills, Seshachalam Hills, Vijayanagar (Hampi, Bellary), Bina (C.P.), and Gwalior State, which are difficult to name definitely.

The birds from Bina (C.P.) are intermediate in colouring and have dark chins. One female from Palkonda Hills has a dark chin, and so have three males from Shimoga, one of which almost approaches the chocolate of the Vellore birds. These three birds are very distinctive, being the darkest in the collection, a blackish brown, with no trace of red, and very heavily streaked above. The bars on the chest are narrower and closer together than in any other specimen.

There appears to be no difference in wing length between specimens from north and south India.

The sequence of plumages is also not clear, and several specimens in adult female plumage have been reliably sexed as males, while birds with barring on the underparts have been found to be females. Perhaps these irregularities may in some way be linked with their social habits, of which we know nothing; a range of specimens

from over a large area is essential and we hope members will help to secure them.

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August 28, 1964.

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# 7. ROOSTING OF THE GREY WAGTAIL [*MOTACILLA CASPICA* (GMELIN)] IN THE THEKKADY WILD LIFE SANCTUARY

A report by Cawkell (1947)<sup>1</sup> is referred to by Dr. Stuart Smith (1950)<sup>2</sup> as describing 'a small tree at Beirut in the Lebanon, that was the winter roosting place of a flock of twenty to thirty Grey Wagtails'. The following note describes a roost at Thekkady where there were 46 Grey Wagtails at least.

Thanks to the United States Information Service, Trivandrum, I was able to spend 3 nights (March 31, April 1st and 2nd, 1964) in the Edapalayam Tourist Bungalow within the Periyar Wild Life Sanctuary, at an altitude of about 3000 ft.

On April 1, at 6.00 hrs. I saw a few slim, long-tailed birds flying from a small Silver Oak (*Grevillea robusta*), alighting on the branches of a larger tree close by, and then flying off. That evening, at 18.5 hrs., Grey Wagtails started arriving in ones and twos. They alighted on the roof, and ran about and preened themselves (giving me excellent opportunities to make sure of the rump colour). Apart from a few subdued *chip-chip* notes, they made little noise and showed very little excitement. A few of them flew into a larger tree (a Rusty Shield Bearer, I think), only to return at once to the roof. Unfortunately, I was called away before I could see them settling down. At 20.00 hrs. I examined the Silver Oak, and the torch-beam revealed eight birds fast asleep. Most of them were quite conspicuous from below, though all of them were well protected from above by leaves. Some sat with body and tail at a 45-degree angle to the ground; others seemed to be more or less resting flat on the leaves of the twigs where they perched. All those that could be seen well had their heads tucked

<sup>1</sup> CAWKELL, E.M. (1947) : A winter roost of Grey Wagtail. *Brit. Birds* 40 : 213 (original not seen).

<sup>2</sup> SMITH, S. (1950) : THE YELLOW WAGTAIL : 88.